

Wishbone learn the hard way

JUST HALF-WAY through their American tour, Wishbone Ash had their equipment stolen in St. Louis and had to return to Britain at the end of last week. The blow hit hard — but the group, as they say in the best budgie ads, are bouncing back.

I expected the drummer Steve Upton to be crying in his boots but he's now at the stage where he can say, "It's one of those things," simply because it's no good worrying over what might have been but better to concentrate on what will be.

"It happened after the gig on Monday night — the roadie, in the early hours of Tuesday, found the van had disappeared. Everyone took it amazingly well. It was such an outrageous thing to happen — if just one guitar had disappeared, there would have been an uproar — but when it's all of the equipment in a 23ft. truck you just don't believe it."



STEVE UPTON talks to Julie Webb

Why didn't they stay over and see if they could retrieve any of the stolen equipment or hire some?

"Well, the following week we had decided to go into the studios," explained Upton, "and record a single — but getting the equipment pinched destroyed that idea. We decided to return the following day so that we could get new equipment here and also to record the single here."

"We'll be going back though, in about three weeks to do some Alice Cooper dates and Dave Mason and Kinks dates — and we should be back in

England playing gigs at the end of August."

The financial loss in terms of cancelled gigs is difficult to estimate — but just losing the equipment has set the band back some £8,000. They are insured — but things take time to go through, so whilst in Britain the band are searching for replacement equipment.

Upton: "The main loss is obviously the equipment — as far as gigs are concerned we can go back and do the places we've had to miss. But one thing that has upset us is that we will have to cancel gigs in Britain that were set up at the end of July. Mainly, it's lost us time and whilst the album needs promotion in America we're not there."

Encores

The tour, in fact, had been going well. Before the band returned news filtered through of encores and a hard time had by bill topping band Jo Jo Gunne.

"We had been getting good reaction," confirmed Steve. "It was like England before we did our own tour. The whole thing over there seems to be developing for us as it did in England, and this time the band seems to have adjusted well."

"The main adjustment is that you're playing to ten, fifteen thousand audiences and

it's not so easy to retain personal contact with a crowd that size."

Returning to the subject of borrowing equipment till the tour was finished — a question asked before, but not answered, Upton told me.

"The cost of hiring equipment and finding the equipment that we could get on with, and that was good enough to us would have been greater than the cost of getting new equipment here. We're not a band who can just go out and buy new equipment like that — it takes time."

"We'll have to put up the money to replace it and later we'll be reimbursed, we hope, by the insurance company. We always cover ourselves in the event of something going wrong."

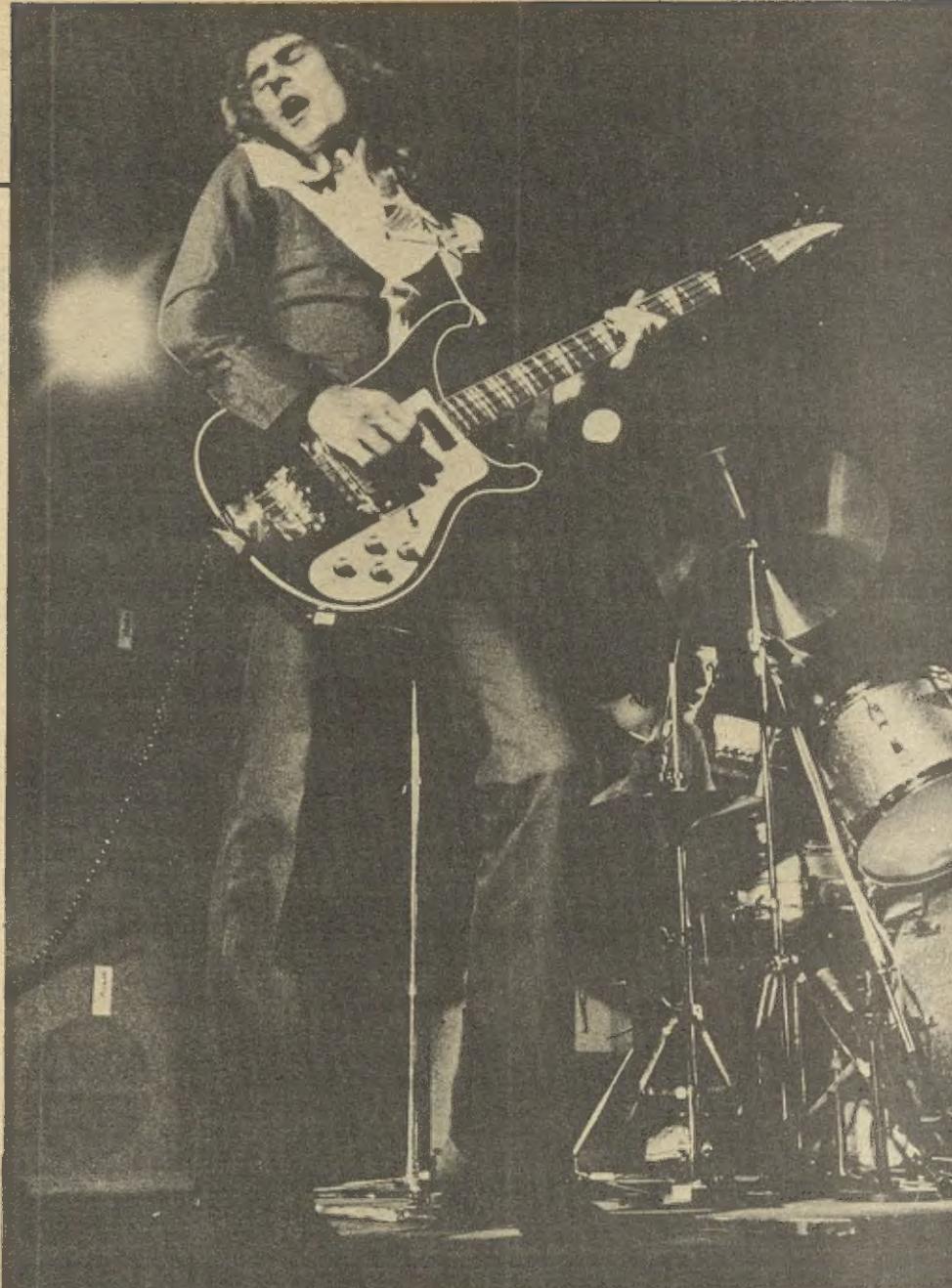
"One has got to keep resources to deal with unforeseen circumstances. If this happened to us a year or eighteen months ago we would have freaked out completely."

"Guitars will be the most difficult things to replace — Martin had both bass guitars pinched — Andy and Ted both had guitars taken, but they did have one guitar with them as well."

"So that's not as bad as it could have been."

"What are the chances of the gear turning up? Are the police very confident of finding it?"

"In America everything is so



MARTIN TURNER

well organised, especially as far as crime is concerned — there are a lot of pawn shops where fences operate and get rid of stuff and they can afford to hold stuff for months. It could turn up anywhere — in fact the police are pretty sure it's gone out of St. Louis."

Once new equipment is found, the first thing on the agenda will be a new single. An unusual move one would think in view of the fact Wishbone are now established as an album band.

"It is now very evident to us that due to the structure of the media if you want people to hear your music you've got to conform to certain rules and regulations — and most of the media deals with singles."

Confident

"We don't want to become a singles band, but after three albums we feel confident that if we do release a single it will be acceptable. Some bands release singles in their initial stage, but I feel the band is stable enough and has a hard core of fans and is now ready for a single."

"It's got to be well thought out — a successful single in fact needs more thought in a way than a successful album. With an album, people will buy it often when they only like three or four tracks, but with a single there's only one. Also, you've got the difficulty of putting across the facets of the band into one record."

"The original idea of making a single in America was to release it at the same time as the tour and then release it in England. It may be one from the album, but I don't honestly know. We can't put any old number out."

The temptation to just sling the whole American scene, now that Wishbone have earned such an acceptance in Britain, must be strong but Upton is insistent that they must have another concerted crack at that market.

Important

"It's very important for us to go back at this stage because apart from anything else the album is on the climb. We can overwork the band in England and that wouldn't help anyone. That's why in these few weeks now we're not going to do any odd gigs — we'd rather wait till later and do another tour."

"We still feel prepared for America — it's no good having a defeatist attitude even if the equipment has been stolen. If America has done that to us we've got to go back and show 'em."

America, though, is a difficult market to conquer, as the band have found.

"A lot of the big names are playing there — really big names like the Stones, and bands like that are taking a lot of capital as far as the promoters are concerned, and promoters are obviously concentrating on them. At the moment we're not making big money — we're only an up and coming band in the States."

Who was it said all good bands had to starve before they got good? Wishbone certainly are learning the hard way as far as America is concerned.